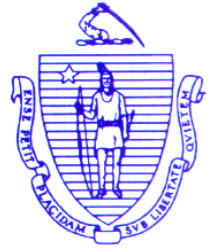




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**MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES
ANNOUNCES NEW REGULATIONS FOR 2002**

At the August 15, 2002 monthly business meeting of the state's Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC), new regulations were enacted affecting commercial and recreational fishing. These actions affect fishing for groundfish, striped bass and lobster. These issues were discussed at August 12-13 public hearings and will be in effect on August 30, 2002.

The majority of enacted regulations were unchanged from those proposed at the August public hearings. However, notable changes were made to the regulations governing gillnet mesh size increases and recreational cod possession limits. The minimum mesh size for all gillnets and trawl nets in state waters was unified at 6 ½". This state regulation represents a liberalization of the 7" minimum mesh size recently enacted by the NMFS in federal waters for "tie-down" gillnets used to catch flatfish. Fishermen are reminded that when possessing both state and federal permits they are subject to the more restrictive rules of the fishery for which they are permitted. Federal gillnet permit holders, regardless of whether or not they are also state permit holders, would thus be restricted to the 7" minimum mesh size for "tie-down" gillnets even when in state waters.

Additionally, a statewide regulation was implemented that amended the combined cod/haddock possession limits for recreational fishermen, replacing them with possession limits solely for cod. The following are the regulations as enacted by the Marine Fisheries Commission at their August 15th business meeting:

1) Changes to commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries to uphold terms of the mediated "Settlement Agreement" in the federal litigation:

(a) Area Closures (322 CMR 8.12):

- Groundfish closures were extended for one month for each of the groundfish "rolling closures" for the month of May in upper Cape Cod Bay and Mass. Bay north of 42° and south of 42°30'; and for the month of June in waters north of 42°30' from Marblehead north to N.H. border.
- Commercial groundfish fishery was re-opened during January through March in waters of upper Cape Cod Bay and Mass. Bay north of 42° and south of 42°30'.

(b) Mesh Size Increases (322 CMR 8.07):

- For all gillnetters and trawlers, minimum mesh size opening was increased to 6½”.

(c) Cod Minimum Size Increases (322 CMR 8.09):

- For commercial fishermen cod minimum size was increased from 19” to 22”.
- For recreational fishermen, cod minimum size was increased from 21" to 23", this rule pertains to all anglers whether fishing from shore, private vessels, or charter/party vessels.

(d) Cod Possession Limits (322 CMR 6.03):

- For all recreational fishermen, daily statewide possession limit of 10 cod from April – November and 5 cod from December – March. Exception: Fishermen on for-hire vessels which are permitted pursuant to 322 CMR 7.01(4)(e), and fishing in federal waters may possess cod in compliance with federal regulations.
- For commercial fishermen fishing in waters north of north of 42°00' N latitude including all waters of Cape Cod Bay, cod daily limit was increased to 500 lbs.

2) Changes to striped bass regulations (322 CMR 6.07):

- Holders of the new for-hire permit are authorized to filet striped bass at-sea for their customers consistent with existing regulations, thereby negating the need for written letter of authorization from the Director.

3) Changes to non-commercial lobster regulations (322 CMR 6.31):

- Non-commercial lobster permit holders are exempt from the trap tag requirement and instead required to mark their traps and buoys with a “N” followed by their 4-digit permit # and then a dash (-) with a single digit from 0 to 9. The dash followed by the 1 digit number from 0 to 9 indicates the sequential pot number in the series (up to ten pots) that the permit holder is fishing.

For more information please contact *Marine Fisheries* at 617.626.1520
or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.